

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO USIA WASHDC

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USIAC

E.O. 11652:: N/A

SUBJ: CONSOLIDATION OF LAA AND USIS FACILITIES

REF: VIENTIANE 4894

1. DAKS AND CONVERSE MET WITH THREE OF REMAINING BNC, LAO AMERICAN ASSOCIATION (LAA), BOARD MEMBERS THURSDAY, JULY 17. BOARD DOES NOT WANT ANOTHER FSIO AS DIRECTOR. BOARD MEMBERS PREFER A LAO DIRECTOR BUT EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT ANY LAO WOULD WANT POSITION NOW. BOARD ALSO EXPRESSED DESIRE NOT TO CONTINUE CURRENT LOCAL HIRE DIRECTOR'S CONTRACT BEYOND 9/30 EXPIRATION DATE.

2. THREE LAO BOARD MEMBERS, ONE OF WHOM HAS SINCE LEFT LAOS, ALL EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT FUTURE OF LAA. BOTH THE PL VICE-MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SOME STUDENTS OF DOK TEACHERS TRAINING COLLEGE HAVE SUGGESTED TO BOARD MEMBERS THAT LAA BE DISSOLVED. LAO LANGUAGE VERSION OF LAA CONSTITUTION, ARTICLE 10, GIVES THE ROYAL LAO GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY UNILATERALLY TO DISSOLVE THE ASSOCIATION IF IT DEEMS ITS OPERATION INCONSISTENT WITH LAO GOVERNMENT POLICY. (ENGLISH VERSION SAME ARTICLE GIVES LAO GOVERNMENT SAME RIGHT BUT REFERS TO DISSOLUTION IN "EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES".45

3. THE LAA IS BUILT ON LAND OWNED BY THE LAO GOVERNMENT.

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THE LEASE BETWEEN THE LAO GOVERNMENT AND THE UNITED STATES

PROVIDES THAT UPON EXPIRATION OF A TEN YEAR PERIOD, DUE JUNE 15, 1977, THE LAND AND BUILDINGS REVERT TO THE ROYAL LAO GOVERNMENT. WHILE THIS INITIAL LEASE WAS EXTENDED FOR AN ADDITIONAL FIVE YEARS EFFECTIVE JUNE 15, 1977, THE EXTENSION DOCUMENT WAS SIGNED BY THE THEN MINISTER OF FINANCE SISOUK NA CHAMPASSAK. WE DOUBT IF ANYTHING SISOUK SIGNED WOULD NOW BE CONSIDERED VALID.

4. ENROLLMENT IN ENGLISH CLASSES AT LAA, THE ORGANIZATION'S MAIN ACTIVITY, HAD GONE FROM 1500 LAST TERM TO 740 THIS TERM. INITIAL REGISTRATION FOR THE COMING TERM INDICATES A FURTHER DECREASE. IN ADDITION, THE AMERICAN DIRECTOR OF COURSES AND ONE OR TWO OF THE FOUR AMERICAN LOCAL HIRE TEACHERS WILL BE DEPARTING SOON.

5. WITH A SUBSTANTIALLY SMALLER ENGLISH TEACHING PROGRAM AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE PGNU'S EXPRESSED DESIRE FOR REDUCTION IN USIS INSTALLATIONS, COUNTRY TEAM RECOMMENDS USIS ATTEMPT TO ACQUIRE LWA AND CONVERT IT TO AN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER COMBINING BOTH USIS AND BNC ACTIVITIES, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE PRESS FUNCTION AND NEWS BULLETIN WHICH WOULD REMAIN IN EMBASSY. THIS WOULD ELIMINATE NEED FOR LANE XWFG OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE AND ENABLE USIA TO ASSIGN A SECOND FSIO WHO WOULD BE DESIGNATED CULTURAL ATTACHE TO RUN THE CENTER.

6. IN ANTICIPATED NEGOTIATIONS OVER SILVER CITY HOUSING COMPOUND EMBASSY COULD OFFER PART OF THE COMPOUND FOR THE LAND AND RESIDUAL RIGHTS TO THE LAA OR LAA LAND AND RIGHTS COULD BE TRANSFERRED TO USG IN LIEU OF A PORTION OF OVERALL PURCHASE PRICE. IF AFTER FURTHER INVESTIGATION A LAND SWAP IS NOT PRACTICAL OR DESIRABLE, MISSION RECOMMENDS THE PGNU BE APPROACHED ABOUT A POSSIBLE RENEGOTIATION OF LAA LEASE WITH USIS AS NEW TENANT.

7. PLEASE ADVISE WHETHER IN PRINCIPLE A LAND SWAP OR RENEGOTIATED LEASE WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE.

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